



PRESS RELEASE

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EDPS Opinion on safer Internet for children: data protection is an essential prerequisite to the safety of children online

Today, the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) adopted an Opinion on the proposed multi-annual Community programme on protecting children using the Internet and other communication technologies, which was presented by the European Commission in February 2008.

The EDPS fully supports the general orientations of the programme aiming at more efficiently protecting children using the Internet, while adapting to the evolution of new technologies. He stresses the fact that the protection of children's data is an essential first step in guaranteeing more safety and prevention of abuse on the Internet. Data protection considerations should also apply to all persons who are connected in some way with the information circulating on the network to prevent illegal content and harmful conduct (e.g. person reported as suspect, reporting person, victim of abuse).

Peter Hustinx, Supervisor, says: "An appropriate protection of the personal information of the child is an essential preliminary step to ensure safety while being online. The protection of children's personal data is of course the main issue, but it should be kept in mind that the protection of children occurs in an environment where the rights of others might also be at stake. Any surveillance of the network should therefore only take place with due respect for the fundamental rights of all individuals involved."

The EDPS Opinion includes the following main comments:

- **data protection authorities** play a decisive role in the protection of children on the Internet. This should be taken into consideration when it comes to the implementation of the multi-annual programme;
- any **reporting system** to be put in place in order to report illegal or harmful content online has to take into account the existing data protection framework. Guarantees related to the supervision of the system, in principle by law enforcement authorities, are decisive elements to comply with this framework;
- **filtering or blocking tools** to control access to networks should be used cautiously, bearing in mind their potential adverse effect (e.g. preventing access to legitimate information) and taking advantage of the privacy enhancing opportunities offered by technology;
- the **development of best practices by the industry** should be promoted. However, the surveillance of telecommunication networks, where necessary in specific circumstances, should be the task of law enforcement authorities.

The [Opinion](#) is available on our website.

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EDPS - The European guardian of personal data protection

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